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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 RANGOON 001448

SIPDIS

STATE FOR EAP/MLS AND INL; PACOM FOR FPA

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PINS](#) [SNAR](#) [BM](#)

SUBJECT: AN UNEASY AND UNCERTAIN PEACE IN KACHIN STATE

REF: A. RANGOON 1256

[1](#)B. RANGOON 107

Classified By: P/E Chief WPMurphy for Reasons 1.4 (b, d)

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY: After a rocky year in Kachin State, marked by renewed tension among and within former insurgent groups, an uneasy though uncertain peace has settled in this northern border region. The Burmese regime has released the leaders of a failed September coup within one former insurgent group, lifted martial law in several restricted zones, and secured the participation of all three of the region's principal cease-fire groups in the ongoing National Convention. Increasing poppy cultivation and historical squabbling among the 12 ethnic Kachin clans, however, will continue to undermine a collective capacity to seek political gains for Kachin State as a whole -- an outcome that increases the Burmese regime's control. END SUMMARY.

CALM AFTER THE STORM

[1](#)2. (C) Rev. Dr. Saboi Jum, an ethnic Kachin community leader and Director of the Shalom Foundation, a conflict resolution NGO, told Emboffs on December 27 that an uneasy peace has returned to Kachin State after a year of renewed tensions among, and within, former insurgent groups throughout Burma's extreme north. According to defense attache sources in Kachin State, the Burmese regime's Northern Military Command recently revoked martial law in several restricted zones within Kachin State.

[1](#)3. (C) Emboffs met with Saboi Jum to discuss plans for "Kachin State Day," an upcoming annual festival in the Kachin capital of Myitkyina that commemorates the post-independence creation of Kachin State. The Reverend said the GOB declined to participate in 2005, likely a result of the October 2004 ouster of the regime's principal envoy to the ethnics, former Prime Minister Khin Nyunt. The SPDC's Northern Command military leader, Maj Gen Ohn Myint, however, has already indicated he will attend the January 2006 Kachin State Day, a sign the regime is keen to patch up relations with the Kachin.

[1](#)4. (SBU) It has been a rocky year in Kachin State. In December 2004, members of the National Democratic Army-Kachin (NDA-K) blamed a botched assassination attempt against their leader, Chairman Zakhong Ting Ying, on the region's most significant cease-fire group, the Kachin Independence Organization (KIO) (ref B). In September of this year, the regime's Northern Commander helped to reverse an internal coup against Ting Ying, one of many internal struggles the NDA-K has experienced as a result of business conflicts involving trade with China in teak, arms, and illicit narcotics (ref A).

PLAYING BALL WITH THE REGIME

[1](#)5. (C) According to Saboi Jum, a mediator for several existing cease-fire arrangements between the GOB and various insurgent groups, the Burmese regime recently released the NDA-K September coup leaders. The NDA-K handed over to the regime's Northern Command weapons and ammunition the conspirators had allegedly smuggled from China, plus an unspecified amount of opium. To date, GOB authorities have taken no further action against the coup leaders, although regional military officials have advised them to stay in Myitkyina and refrain from returning to the field.

[1](#)6. (C) Saboi Jum said that three of the five NDA-K coup leaders had been delegates to previous sessions of the regime's National Convention (NC). NDA-K leadership selected alternates to replace the coup leaders as delegates to the current session of the NC, which resumed in early December. Saboi Jum noted that approximately 40 ethnic Kachin delegates attend the NC. The regime permits each of the three main cease-fire groups -- the KIO, the NDA-K, and the Kachin Defense Army (KDA) -- to send five delegates and the GOB handpicks the other 25. Saboi Jum ventured that the GOB will likely recess the NC at the end of January 2006.

OPIUM: ADDING FUEL TO THE FIRE

[1](#)7. (C) Saboi Jum added that the Kachin Consultative Assembly, a local mediation group that the KIO spearheaded in 2002, has tried to solve fissures among the disparate Kachin factions.

The group, however, has achieved no tangible success in resolving tribal differences and commercial conflicts. The NDA-K pulled out of the Assembly in March. Increased poppy cultivation has added to tensions in Kachin State. The influential Kachin Baptist Convention, for which Saboi Jum formerly served as Secretary General, discourages involvement in the drug business by excommunicating church members who grow poppies. Nonetheless, said Saboi Jum, poppy cultivation and opium production have risen due to the financial incentives offered by Chinese traffickers, and even some church leaders cultivate so-called "flower gardens" (poppies).
COMMENT: ERODING COLLECTIVE POWER

18. (C) The strife-torn Kachin, comprised of a dozen distinct ethnic minority clans, are a prime example of ethnic disunity in the country's hinterlands. Following Burmese independence, the pursuit of a federal system of government and increased local autonomy briefly unified the Kachin in their struggles against Rangoon. The current regime, however, has enticed the insurgent groups into individual cease-fire arrangements with lucrative, though separate, commercial concessions. The resulting jealousies and turf battles have eroded any notion of collective resolve, and capacity, to seek political gains for Kachin State and instead pitted the various Kachin groups against each other -- an outcome that greatly enhances the ability of the Burmese regime to maintain control. END COMMENT.
VILLAROSA